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Report from Washington

BY WALTER TROHAN

CHIEF OF CHICAGO TRIBUNE'S WASHINGTON BUREAU
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WASHINGTON, Jan. 1—President Kennedy has ransomed his conscience and Cuban Premier Fidel Castro's appetite for blackmail has increased by the 53 million dollars in food, drugs, and money it fed upon in the release of the Bay of Pigs prisoners.

The release of the 1,113 prisoners was admirably timed for Christmas, the season of joy, good will, thanksgiving, warmth, and family reunions. In the spirit of the day and the rejoicing over freedom for the prisoners, the fiasco of the bloody landing at the Bay of Pigs on April 17, 1961, was forgotten.

Forgotten also was the fact that President Kennedy had given the green light for the invasion without adequate air coverage. While his aids were frantic trying to pass the buck of blame elsewhere, preferably on the Republicans, the President courageously shouldered responsibility for the failure.

Kennedy was cheered by the released prisoners in Miami when he expressed the hope that Cuba will some day be free. The prisoners were happy to be free, and he was happy to get the weight of the Bay of Pigs debacle somewhat off his conscience.



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U. S. Business Men Put Up Ransom

THE RELEASE was effected thru the payment of 53 million dollars in foods, drugs, and nearly 3 millions in cash. Virtually all of this was put up by business men, whom the President said he had been warned against by his father, Joseph P. Kennedy. The President, who has filled his New Frontier with professors, has never recalled his father's warning against classroom "liberals."

Food and drug men were allowed tax deductions for their contributions, which became charity because they were relayed to Castro thru the American Red Cross. It would not seem that the general public was affected, yet Mitchell Rogovin, an official of the internal revenue service, said that the government's share of the cost could be 20 million dollars thru lost taxes. The government, in this reference, means the taxpayers who will have to make up the loss in revenue over the next few years.

What the indirect costs were to taxpayers in military mobilization, military activities, government operations, and the like, will never be known. Estimates run into the tens and even the hundreds of millions.

Like all blackmailers, Castro hasn't stopped his demands. The ease with which his demands were met has inspired him to ask for more.

Castro Ties Another String to Promise

CASTRO TIED a string on his promise to release relatives of the ill-fated Cuban invasion brigade. He said that all those wanting to leave would be permitted to do so only if Pan American World Airways resumes its flights between Miami and Havana.

Private and commercial flights over the island were banned during the crisis over the construction of Russian missile bases. Pan American officials have no taste for resumption of the flights because restrictions and limited travel had occasioned heavy losses on the route.

Castro evidently wants the flights resumed for prestige purposes. He is posing as a big man in Cuba because he has made the United States accede to his demands. Food and drugs will make the recipients happy for a time, so that there is no doubt his regime has been bolstered by the American payments.

Castro has held out the hope that about 20 American prisoners might be released during the negotiations for the release of the Bay of Pigs prisoners. Now, he will undoubtedly demand ransom, in one form or another, for the release of the Americans.

Payment of blackmail is often as morally destructive to the payer as to the payee.

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